POLITICAL FEATURE 1-1696 OCTOBER 24, 1976
JOHN GUERRINI/NEW YORK

U.N. DAY

INTRO: TODAY, SUNDAY, IS UNITED NATIONS DAY, COMMEMORATING THE RATIFICATION OF THE U.N. CHARTER ON OCTOBER TWENTY FOURTH NINETEEN FORTY FIVE. OUR U.N. CORRESPONDENT JOHN GUERRINI HAS SOME THOUGHTS ON THE OCCASION.

TEXT: AT THE AGE OF THIRTY ONE, THE UNITED NATIONS IS OLDER THAN THE MAJORITY OF THE PEOPLE ON THE PLANET. THEY HAVE NO EXPERIENCE OF THE EVENTS THAT BROUGHT THE U.N. INTO BEING... THE DEVASTATING CONFLICT KNOWN AS WORLD WAR TWO. IT WAS THE VICTORIOUS ALLIES OF THAT WAR...THE UNITED STATES, THE SOVIET UNION, BRITAIN, FRANCE AND CHINA...THAT SET UP THE U.N. AND IT'S A MEASURE OF HOW FAR THE WORLD IS BEHIND US THAT THE THREE DEFEATED ENEMY COUNTRIES ARE ACTIVE MEMBERS OF THE ORGANIZATION. IN FACT TODAY ITALY AND JAPAN HOLD SEATS ON THE SECURITY COUNCIL WHILE WEST GERMANY HAS JUST BEEN ELECTED TO START A TWO YEAR TERM IN JANUARY.

YES, ITS A DIFFERENT WORLD. NOT ONLY FROM THE WAR PERIOD BUT ALSO FROM THE EARLY POST-WAR YEARS WHEN THE MAJOR INTERNATIONAL ISSUE WAS THE SPLIT THAT GREW BETWEEN THE ALLIES, THE EAST WEST TENSION THAT CAME TO BE CALLED THE COLD WAR.

HERE AT THE U.N. THE FOCUS HAS SHIFTED NOW TO THE CONFLICTS BETWEEN NORTH AND SOUTH, BETWEEN THE EIGHT INDUSTRIAL COUNTRIES AND THE POOR DEVELOPING COUNTRIES. THE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES ARE BY AND LARGE FORMER COLONIES WHICH HAVE GAINED THEIR INDEPENDENCE SINCE THE BIRTH OF THE U.N. AND NEARLY TRIPLED ITS RANKS TO ONE HUNDRED FORTY FIVE MEMBERS. WITH MANY INTERESTS IN COMMON, THESE COUNTRIES FORM A NEW AND VOCAL MAJORITY IN THE UNITED NATIONS AND, NOW THAT MEMBERSHIP IS PRACTICALLY UNIVERSAL, THE U.N. HAS INCREASINGLY TRIED TO PROVIDE THE FRAMEWORK TO DEAL WITH GLOBAL PROBLEMS. IN RECENT YEARS IT HAS ORGANIZATED GIGANTIC CONFERENCES

ON FOOD, POPULATION, TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT, THE ENVIRONMENT, THE LAW OF THE SEA.

OF COURSE, SOME OF THE OLD PROBLEMS REMAIN. THERE ARE ENOUGH ATOMIC WEAPONS AROUND TO DESTROY THE WORLD SEVERAL TIMES OVER AND THE NUMBER OF COUNTRIES PROCESSING THEM IS THREATENING TO GROW. AND THE MIDDLE EAST AND CYPRUS ARE STILL THE SCENES OF POTENTIAL CONFLICT -- BUT UN PEACE KEEPING FORCES ARE STATIONED BETWEEN THE ANTAGONISTS IN BOTH PLACES. AND THE SEARCH CONTINUES AT THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY TO FIND A WAY TO DEAL WITH THE CHALLENGE OF DISARMAMENT.

ALTHOUGH THE U.N. COMES IN FOR A LOT OF CRITICISM FROM ALL SIDES, NOBODY SERIOUSLY TALKS ABOUT DISMANTLING IT. AS U.S. SENATOR HOWARD BAKER REMARKED HERE THE OTHER DAY, THE UNITED NATIONS IS COMING TO BE SEEN AS A PERMANENT INSTITUTION BECAUSE IT HAS ENDURED. IT'S GETTING DIFFICULT TO IMAGINE THE WORLD WITHOUT IT.

-0-